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ABSTRACT

Children in a first grade classroom (n=17) participated in a program to develop listening and speaking skills in the elementary school classroom. The importance of listening and speaking to social, academic, and developmental needs is discussed. Various programs that produced increases in these skills were evaluated and integrated in a new program. The program attempted to provide for listening and speaking practice and development within the existing school curriculum by making it a part of every aspect of the school day. Integration included modeling, directed questioning, the production of a play, storytelling, social experiences, and literature. At the end of the term, students were active listeners who faced the teacher and were quiet and attentive when spoken to. They were able to answer questions without bringing in stories totally unrelated to the question. Students were able to put storytelling skills into writing folktales with details and a definite beginning, middle, and end. Children also began to show higher order thinking in comprehension activities. These skills also increased students' attention to directions in content areas, especially math. This qualitative research can be a model for future quantitative studies. (Contains 39 references; appendixes contain sample versions of folktales told by students and a checklist of student skills after a folktale unit.) (Author/RS)

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A program to develop the listening and speaking skills of children in a first grade classroom

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A program to develop the listening and speaking skills of children in a first grade classroom

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Abstract

17 children in a first grade classroom participated in this program to develop listening and speaking skills in the elementary school classroom. The importance of listening and speaking to social, academic, and developmental needs is discussed. Various programs that produced increases in these skills are evaluated and integrated in a new program. This program attempts to provide for listening and speaking practice and development within the existing school curriculum by making it a part of every aspect of the school day. Integration included modeling, directed questioning, the production of a play, storytelling, social experiences, and literature. This qualitative research can be a model for future quantitative studies.

A program to develop the listening and speaking skills of children in a first grade classroom

Our elementary schools must meet the needs of children in four language modes: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Past research has shown that teachers often ignore the listening and speaking language modes in classrooms, assuming these skills are already developed. Lerstrom (1990) found that 75% of 412 responding elementary school teachers provided no oral language instruction, and only 32% of secondary schools require a speech communication course. Many of these communication courses were taught by teachers who had no training in the discipline. Instead of teaching oral language skills, many teachers focus their attention on reading and writing in a traditional language arts curriculum. Research shows us that programs that teach listening and speaking skills in an integrated approach help children develop these skills, along with reading, writing, and critical thinking skills, to meet the needs of our social world.

Importance of Listening Skills and Problems in Our Schools

Listening skills are important to children in the near future. "Children who can translate their thoughts and ideas into words are more likely to be successful in school. Friendships and relationships (between children) often depend on the ability to express feelings" appropriately (Smith 1993). More importantly, students who do not develop good listening and speaking skills will have lifelong consequences because of their deficit. "Professional and personal success is related to a person's ability to speak, listen, read, and write effectively. As with other abilities, communication skills must be

supported and reinforced in a variety of contexts" (Lerstrom 1990). In a survey of graduate students, Edleston (1987) found that oral communication skills were at the head of a list related to job success. These skills are also important in successful marital relationships since they effect how couples communicate (Scoresby 1977).

There is a real need for speaking and listening skills training of young children today. Edleston (1987) found that many kindergarten children lacked attention, concentration, and appropriate responses to discussion questions. Some of the children she observed could never attend to verbal directions, while others constantly needed reminders. These children often tuned out verbal directions and commands, "making it necessary for the teacher to repeat the same information more than once" (Edleston 1987). The teacher found that children would not be able to complete independent work correctly, but when the teacher went over to help the child individually, the child could do it. The child understood the process, but did not listen to the directions properly. Why are some children unable to answer straightforward questions or follow straightforward directions?

If talk and listening are so important, shouldn't we find schools that encourage the development of these skills? Unfortunately, for the overwhelming majority of our schools, the answer to this question is no. Thayer-Bacon (1992) believes that teachers do not include listening and thinking activities in their curriculum for a variety of reasons. These include the demands of a curriculum including physical education, art, music, computers, foreign language, spelling, handwriting, math, reading, writing, science, health, and special programs to educate children about family and life. Combined with classroom management activities including transitions to lunch and recess, teachers feel

they have to set priorities, and meet curricular demands first. Wells and Wells (1984) found that 44% of teacher talk in concerned with management tasks. Teaching children how to have a large or even small group discussion takes time, which many teachers believe they don't have. However, Thayer- Bacon believes teaching bits and pieces of information throughout the day is at a superficial level, which teaches our children to think at a superficial level.

Indeed, many teachers believe a quiet classroom is a learning classroom where children are meeting the many demands of the curriculum. However, Chew (1987) tells us that a classroom devoid of oral language instruction can be disastrous if one of our goals is "to develop students who are active language users, because large numbers of our children come from homes where language is not a central activity" (Chew 1987). Latch key children and single parent children may not receive experiences needed for language growth like "opportunities to sit together to share the day's experiences, to question and to discuss these experiences." Children watch 25-54 hours of television per week, and may have decreased attention spans due to quick shifts in scene and passive visual stimuli. (Edleston, 1987). Schools are not "providing a linguistically rich environment able to provide compensation for those believed deprived at home" (Wells and Wells, 1984).

In fact, we are not only not compensating for deficits, but we might be a contributing factor to language problems. Teachers are not providing the language experiences that children need to grow as learners and thinkers. If an average of 75% of classroom time is spent on instruction, and 70% of that time is of teachers talking to students (Blasi, 1996), are we encouraging children to talk? Blasi found that teachers

outtalk their entire class of students in a ratio of 3 to 1. Most of this talk was lecturing and less than 1 percent required some kind of open response involving student opinion. Most student responses were factual answers to the teacher's question. The only questions asked by students were intended to confirm teacher wishes.

Wells and Wells (1984) also found that students at school had even less language experiences than at home. Students initiated fewer interactions, asked fewer questions, and took fewer turns per interaction. Lessons "made very narrow demands upon the student's use of language." Students were not encouraged to initiate exchanges, inquire, persuade, surmise, or criticize (Hynds and Rubin, 1990). It is frightening that children at school had utterances when they did respond that were "syntactically simpler and contained a narrower range of semantic content" then when they were playing with friends or family at home.

School interactions that require less interpretation and discussion on the part of students has an impact on them. Older students begin to believe that information lies within someone else, not themselves. "Question and answer methods common to schools quickly wears down the intellectual aspects of children and displaces curiosity" (Blasi, 1996). We can not allow children to pass through the educational system without developed basic skills. Even Congress has recognized the need for an emphasis on listening and speaking in the classroom. In 1978, Congress enacted the Basic Skills Improvement Act-Title II, "which broadened the definition of basic skills to include communication, both oral and written" (Reed, 1983). Some states have even begun to require that oral communication be made a part of the elementary school curriculum.

Components of Listening and Speaking

50-75% of classroom time is spent listening to the teacher, other students, or audiovisual stimuli, so we must make sure children are listening to the best of their ability (Smith, 1993). Some people wonder how to teach listening and speaking because they seem so straightforward. However, "to listen is not just to hear; it is the active construction of meaning from all signals-verbal and nonverbal, that the speaker is sending" (Hennings, 1992). There are many components to talking and listening that must be taught to children.

Competence in communication involves many factors. These include general knowledge of how the use of language is affected by people and situations, and the sequencing of conversation (Harmon, 1988). Edleston (1987) adds that the listening process itself in communication involves four factors: sensing or learning the message, understanding and interpreting the message, evaluating and appraising the message, and responding or doing something with the message. Listening not only involves these things, but listeners must also be able to pick out highlights of a conversation and ask relevant questions (Smith, 1993).

To have a conversation, students must also know how to respond to the message they hear and interpret. They must know when and how much to talk. Talking in excess "indicates pragmatic rules violations in turn taking, initiation, and termination of conversation" (Harmon, 1988). These are subtle forms of communication that when broken cause children to be seen as unacceptable socially by peers and seen as behavior problems to parents and teachers.

"Talk is social in its very essence, though some talk is for the self and some is for

others" (Lindfors, 1990). Talk can be used to connect with others, explore and understand the world, make sense of the world, and reveal oneself. Talk contains many components for different audiences. Children must learn to talk to themselves, hold conversations, interviews, small group discussions, talk to teachers, parents, peers, and members of the community. The must learn how to change their talk for the appropriate situation and audience (Hynds & Rubin, 1990). Talk has four roles that must be learned, according to Reed (1983). These roles include ability to demonstrate skills, demonstrate knowledge, socially appropriate talk, and talk that is appropriate for a given situation. In the past, students only had a chance to practice the public communication or knowledge demonstration role, teachers talked and students listened-"or if they did not listen, at least they did not talk" (Hynds & Rubin, 1990). However, students need a chance to participate in the full range of communication roles. The teacher can be more than the talker and knowledge holder, but instead the "consultant, facilitator, and coach" (Hynds & Rubin, 1990).

An Integrated Approach

A teacher does not need to teach the components of talk and listening in isolation. Traditionally, it was believed that children learned to read and write after learning how to talk and to listen. However, "current research shows that all four of these skills are actually learned simultaneously from day one. Literacy skills are acquired from experience with the environment" (Bradt, 1990). Cullinan (1993) describes how talk and listening effect the whole language arts curriculum. Talk is necessary for all subjects, since it is the "major means by which learners explore the relationship between what they already know and new observations or interpretations which they meet" (Cullinan, 1993).

Cullinan goes on to explain that students learn by talking, clarify thoughts by talking, comprehend better with discussion of reading, write better after talking during writing conferences, develop confidence by speaking in front of peers, and provide a window to their own thinking through their talk.

There are many ways to encourage talking and listening in an integrated school day. Science, Math, and Social Studies classes can involve oral reports, class discussion, interviews, role plays, brainstorming, recitations, debates, and dialogue groups (Weiss, 1990). Teachers can read riddles, play twenty questions, have students listen for inside and outside sounds, provide show and tell time, and read stories to children involving any unit. Teachers can model, question, read and discuss literature, discuss writing, use drama, and create and encourage social experiences. These skills need to be modeled and directly taught, so that students understand what is expected of them and strive for better communicative competence.

Modeling

Modeling is one of the first steps to developing speaking and listening skills. Talk and listening can be modeled continuously throughout the year. Teachers need to provide an environment where children feel safe to share their thoughts. This means that teachers should model how to be a considerate speaker and listener. Teachers need to make sure that they call on people fairly and equitably, according to a report by the National Council of Teachers of English in 1984. If teachers call on people who are their favorites or try and catch people who do not know the answers, they will not encourage a community environment for communication. They must explain the importance of talking and listening, and how they feel when they are not "heard" by others. Smith

(1993) maintains that teachers must listen patiently, maintain eye contact, encourage talking by invitation, avoid cutting children off, and listen to nonverbal messages. By reflecting feelings, Smith believes teachers can help clarify and relate experiences. Teachers can also avoid dead-end questions, act interested, and shares their own thoughts with children.

Teachers who are good models in the classroom as speakers and listeners will help their students became better communicators. However, it is not enough to simply be a good model, teachers must also explain explicitly what they are doing to students. "Knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors which allow effective student listening must be taught and reinforced" (Edleston, 1987). For listening, teachers can show students how to use body language to convey interest and attention. Students can watch how to lean forward, look at the speaker, and allow their face to show feelings. Teachers can say things like, "When you look at me it tells me that you are interested in what I'm saying. When your eyes are wide open it tells me you are alert" (Hetherington, 1989). Teachers can ask students why listening is important, and model only saying things once. This should motivate students to listen to directions the first time only. They can pause often while speaking to allow listeners to think about what is said, and ask students to repeat what someone else just said. By modeling and holding children accountable, children have more motivation to listen (Hetherington, 1989).

Students must also learn what kind of talk is appropriate in and out of the classroom. Teachers need to model and explain how loud one should speak in certain situations, and when a person should be able to talk. Teachers can model what kinds of language can be used with different people, and use role-plays to demonstrate what kind

of talk is expected. They can stop class if students are talking effectively and have students watch what an effective conversation might look like. Teachers can model how some language can hurt feelings of others, and how other language may not be damaging. Once teachers model these behaviors, they can hold students accountable for talking loud enough and effectively in the classroom. This can be done by taping student talk and using self/teacher evaluation checklists (Hetherington, 1989). Blasi (1996) believes that teachers too often:

> "limit themselves to the role of information source. Teachers need to model how to be receivers of information, active listeners, as well as information generators. These roles allow the teacher to act as nurturer, encouraging the children to take on multiple roles, allowing them the freedom of choice in selecting messages to transmit, paying attention to what they transmit, how they construct meaning, and creating an energized classroom."

As professionals, teachers can learn to play all of these roles, and no longer be simply information sources.

Questioning

Modeling can continue throughout the year to encourage talking and listening in the classroom. However, teachers can play a more active role through the questioning process. Questioning can help language and critical thinking simultaneously since "critical thinking is actually a social event…our thinking is affected by our own language and the meaning and use of words is something we learn socially, from each other" (Bacon and Thayer-Bacon, 1993). Thayer-Bacon (1992) states that to begin to teach children how to be critical thinkers, we need to listen to them and encourage them to talk.

Young children are unconscious of their own thoughts and unaware that they have a point of view. They therefore can not understand that others have a point of view that is different from theirs. By talking to others in a dialogue, children begin to understand their point of view and the point of view of others, and can think critically. Good questioning allows this dialogue to encourage children to maintain their point of view, not insisting that they share the teacher's beliefs (Thayer-Bacon, 1992). Interaction with others moves children out of egocentric thought. Children can be encouraged to think critically with questions like "How did you come up with that idea?" or "What were you thinking?" (Blasi, 1996). In a program of questioning techniques with kindergartners, Blasi found that his students became active listeners and receivers and generators of ideas. They critiqued, questioned, collaborated, and recognized the thoughts of peers.

Siegel (1992) gives us guidelines on how to use the questioning process effectively in a classroom to encourage thinking, speaking, and listening. A teacher must begin by listening to what the child has to say, make sure she has correctly interpreted it, make the child's meaning a point of departure for her contribution, and take into account the child's ability to comprehend. Using these techniques compared to direct instruction, children in Siegel's study made significant gains in verbal-expressive skills compared to the direct instruction group.

Questioning can take the place of teacher talk in the classroom, so that students can learn from one another while practicing oral language skills. Teachers can ask questions that encourage exploration of new ideas, exchanging views, explaining concepts, and descriptions of what a child sees. Teachers must learn to ask divergent

questions that promote longer responses and where there is not a "right" answer (Jones, 1988).

Palmerton (1990) reminds us that "oral verbal products (through questioning) don't just happen." Like readings and writing, oral products involve a process. Teachers must remember to discuss what makes a good class discussion, talk about why and how to question, and make sure all of their expectations are explained clearly. After students have learned how to answer questions and question others, teachers must make sure they leave adequate wait time for students to process what they heard and respond in a meaningful way to the discussion. This allows students to reflect upon what they heard and makes listening seem more like a process, rather than just hearing (Donaldson, 1978).

The internal development processes necessary for learning "develops only when children are interacting with people in their environment and in cooperation with peers" (Eeds and Wells, 1991). Through questioning and dialogue, the group constructs deeper meaning to concepts. Questioning allows oral language practice along with critical thinking skills. Children can be provided with even more oral language practice through the use of questioning and dialogue related to books and the reading process.

Literature and Oral Communication Skills

Siegel (1992) states that expression in oral language development is a precursor to learning how to read. Oral language development and exposure to literature were the best predictors to reading achievement at age seven. To assist children in reading, teachers must help students to relate the material to their own experiences, letting the students do the majority of the talking and letting each student respond (Siegel, 1992). By scaffolding in this manner, teachers allow children to practice listening to each other, speaking, and

comprehension skills. A study by Eeds and Wells (1991) supports Siegel's finding that oral language can help reading skills and vice versa. Study groups that were prompted by teacher's questions not only recalled information, but they also made inferences and supported these inferences with textual evidence. Students who were questioned about purpose of the book were able to determine motivation and effectiveness of authors. These authors also emphasize personal meaning of books to develop interest in hypothesizing, interpreting, verifying, and critiquing. They felt students learned from each other from meaningful talk about literature. Literature questioning sessions allowed these children to build discussion skills.

Listening to stories can also prompt discussion. Hennings (1992) feels all four language modes can be integrated if students listen to stories, talk about ideas, and then write in response to what they have heard. "listening to stories is a beneficial language acquisition strategy for children who are at-risk for reading problems" (Reisner, 1996). Reisner's study also acclaimed the use of the read aloud to help students who are prompted to listen for specific details. Several children in this study were not only able to retell the story after listening to it, but also used new vocabulary from the story in discussion. After numerous discussion experiences, children talked confidently and could remember more details from the story. Taped stories not only encouraged children to listen, but it also provided enough support for many of the children to be able to read the story independently after hearing it.

There are many benefits to listening to literature besides developing listening skills. Casbergue and Harris (1996) found that when listening to literature, children "unconsciously internalize the typical structures that narratives take in their society."

Knowing story grammar helps students predict and follow events when reading on their own. By hearing stories, children can compare the differences in structure between oral and written language and increase their vocabularies. They also state that most importantly, in his opinion, children learn that reading is a pleasurable pursuit by listening to literature. However, Fitzgerald points out that listening to literature also contributes to oral language development since it suggests "syntactical structures to follow and words to use, and it also allows students to stretch their oral competencies to explain literature experiences to their peers" (Fitzgerald, 1993).

Once children have listened to literature, therefore, they should be encouraged to share the experience with others. Readers need a chance to share initial responses, questions, connections, reactions and critical dialogue related to personal experiences (Short and Klassen, 1993). Talking with students after the listening experience develops story sense. Since each listener's experience is unique, retelling what each student heard lets students have the chance to reflect on what they heard and suggests new ways to listen as they hear the versions of others (Barton, 1993). Retelling stories in small groups affords many opportunities. The story may change, re-emerge, take on new characters, and have parts that used to seem insignificant take on greater importance. Even new endings can be added that "are still completely within the spirit and intent of the story" (Barton, 1993). Fitzgerald states that over time children begin to accept the new versions told by friends and appreciate the richness these versions add. Children also develop oral narrative abilities, 'deeper respect for the craft of authors, and insights into story development-skills they can transfer into their reading and writing" (Fitzgerald, 1993).

Children can learn how to tell a tale through modeling. They can hear a story and then watch their teacher retell the tale. They can then practice retelling the tale, adding a detail each time, in small groups. This allows children the opportunity to listen and attend to details, and learn to add them when using oral language to make their stories interesting (Barton, 1993).

Listening to and talking about literature can do tremendous things for children's language abilities. Busch and Jenkins found that reading and discussing literature helped their disabled readers become familiar with written language and express themselves appropriately. Their readers learned how to communicate what they knew to others so that they could share not only their knowledge, but also their feelings about literature. D'Arcy (1989) states that getting children to discuss books with their peers extends their understanding, in other words, encourages critical thinking in the classroom. Children can then play with the words they heard through choral reading/speaking, and develop an understanding not only of what is read, but how to convey emotion through their voice.

Discussions regarding reading and literature can be used to develop listening and speaking skills while not taking away from the reading demands of the curriculum. Children need to learn about story structure, so why not allow them the chance to learn it while also giving them the chance to practice oral language? They can receive even more practice by telling stories from wordless books. Wordless books provide the opportunity for children to demonstrate their creativity and knowledge of story structure while speaking to peers (Bradt, 1990).

An integrated language arts curriculum would allow children opportunities to not only practice reading, listening, and speaking, but would also add opportunities to write

and extend knowledge of the other language modes. Chew (1987) feels that listening and speaking follows along a similar process as writing, and therefore these topics should be integrated. Prewriting involves questioning, brainstorming, discussing, and interviewing. Listening and speaking can be used in this part of the process, but these skills also have a getting ready stage like prewriting that can be taught to children. Drafting and revising can involve talking through the process of writing, just as language when spoken must be chosen and put together into an integrated piece. This is more obvious in planned speeches, where speakers write their speeches first and choose appropriate placement of words. Listeners also follow the same process, reformulating what they heard and making connections to their prior knowledge.

Listening and speaking can be part of the writing process, just as these skills follow a similar process. Haas Dyson (1990) believes that talk can be a dynamic catalyst for writing growth. Talk provides the social energy that provides "nurturing networks" and relationships as children discuss what they write. Talk can be analytic, as children critique their writing and the writing of others. Talk is also a social consequence of sharing writing. Haas Dyson found that students in her study began to use talk for multiple roles after using it with writing. They understood that they could analyze meaning through talk, and that words are "chosen, written, and considered for their capacities not merely to represent messages, but to mediate between writers and readers." Van Dijk (1989) concurs in that talk helps writers shape their craft. He used talk in peer conferences where children brainstormed ideas and added more detail to their writing. He believes that talking through ideas helps the writer do a first draft in their heads, which means greater flexibility in editing than if the first draft was written on paper.

Teachers can make connections using integrated talk, reading, and writing experiences (Braun, 1986). Braun found this in a fourth grade class, which used talk to help them write poems about weather. Power also illustrated this in a 1989 study with three boys having trouble in writing. The boys began to meet about writing because Powers felt that:

> "Writing and reading tend to be solitary activities and are all too often competitive. Talking and listening, on the other hand, are by definition social and at least potentially, collaborative. They therefore provide an excellent means for fostering collaboration in learning through pooling of ideas and negotiating point of views"

The boys in Power's study began to sort through ideas, information, and how to include each other's comments in their writing. Collaborating by talking and listening to each other added depth to their work. Writing conferences can be successful like these programs if students feel safe in an environment that encourages positive comments first, clarifies misconceptions, and allows questions about writing to foster communication between readers and writers (Bunce-Crim, 1993).

Drama and Oral Performance

Talking and listening can be integrated in the classroom through the reading and writing of literature. However, children also need a chance to perform orally. This can be done through the use of drama in the classroom.

> "Dramatizing a story one has just read or pantomiming a poem or a story as it is presented orally, helps children internalize the meaning of language, extend their own range of understanding, or make unfamiliar words their own. Often classroom drama deliberately leads into writing or reading, as well as talk" (Wagner, 1990)

The Tasmanian Education Department in 1980 states that drama can not only develop speaking and listening skills, but discussion after drama can help dramatic skills as well. Children need the opportunity to reflect upon what they have done and discuss not only what happened, but also their feelings regarding what happened. Drama sharpens skills, because it allows children to monitor their own actions when communicating with others. Drama can open discussions about how listeners and speakers should stand while they talk and how their body should react to make it look real. These techniques may carry over into other conversations in the real world. In fact, Sebasta (1993) found improved language skills when using drama for children of low socioeconomic class and who use English as a second language. Drama had a positive impact on reading comprehension, writing, oral language skills, self-esteem, and critical thinking skills. Drama, therefore, can be used in an integrated curriculum to help all four language modes.

Social Purpose of Communication

Curricular demands of the language modes, like reading, writing, or drama, are perfect opportunities to aid in the development of listening and speaking and vice versa. However, language use in school is not always of an academic purpose. Students also need to learn how to communicate with others, especially their peers. Students can learn a lot from each other, as well as develop meaningful relationships for emotional growth. Children with language problems have trouble with social isolation, over dependence on adults, entering play groups, limited participation in play groups, and disruptive behavior once they have entered play groups (Harmon, 1988). Children need to know how to enter into peer relationships, yet "talk that serves that deeply human purpose of connecting with others often finds little support in the classroom" (Lindfors, 1990). Talk is how

individuals develop a mutual understanding to share thoughts and feelings (Wells and Wells, 1984). Children need to learn how to "listen sympathetically to what people have to say, to be generous and receptive to the ideas of others before they judge those ideas as right or wrong" (Bacon and Thayer-Bacon, 1993)

Teaching children to talk socially appropriately can be done in the same manner that other manners of talk are taught. Bacon and Thayer-Bacon (1993) believe that good communication skills for peers need to be modeled. It is also important to encourage talk through setting up a classroom environment where children are encouraged to talk to one another academically and socially. This can be done simply by organizing students into tables or clusters of desks (Wells and Wells, 1984). It can also be done by having "chats" with small groups of students during lunch or recess. In these chats, questioning can be modeled for children to follow. The more experience children have with peers, the more likely they will be able to have genuine and successful conversations with them (Bacon and Thayer-Bacon, 1993).

A New Program

Listening and speaking can be integrated into the curriculum through modeling, questioning, the reading and writing of literature, drama, and social experiences. It therefore should not be something that can be accomplished in a week's unit. Instead, children should have opportunities to practice listening and speaking throughout the day, everyday. This program was designed to integrate all of these activities into the curricular demands of a first grade classroom. The program was used in an eight week placement, such that children recognized the importance of listening and speaking clearly, and could use these skills for the rest of the year. The program was intended to

develop communication skills in this first grade classroom to allow students and teachers to understand one another, think critically, and relate to one another to promote social and emotional growth. Children were expected to refine and elaborate listening and speaking abilities such that they would have the skills expected of them in future grades (Harmon, 1988).

Participants

17 children, nine boys and eight girls, from a first grade classroom in a county participated in this program directed during my teaching associateship. The county school draws from an affluent community, with only one child in the target class receiving free lunch from the county. The school consists of a mostly Caucasian population, such that only three minority students out of 446 total students attend the school. 16 children in the target class were Caucasian, while one child was adopted and of unknown racial status. Three of the children in the target classroom received speech assistance from the speech therapist in Kindergarten, while two children continued this support during their first grade year.

Methods

Listening and speaking activities were incorporated in a variety of classroom areas to integrate the skills into the entire curriculum. These activities included modeling, directed listening/questioning activities, literature activities, acting, and social experiences. All of these activities were used as a response to the research of successful programs for listening and speaking, yet for the first time were used as a combined whole. Each of these activities will be explained with further suggestions for future classrooms.

Modeling

Starting from the first day of school, children were taught expressively how to listen and speak in the classroom. The first day, children were asked what part of their body they used to listen. One child said the ear. With prompting, someone else said the mouth. This continued to include the head, the hands, and the whole body. Students were shown how that when you listen you use your mouth because it is either closed, or you can make noises like uh huh. You use your head by turning to the person and nodding. You use your eyes by looking at them. To listen, students learned they should have their noses pointed right at the person, their hands should not be fidgeting, and their eyes should be looking at them. This was modeled and then practiced by the students. For the next seven weeks, good listeners were chosen as models to the group, and others were reminded what they could do to show they were listening.

Speaking skills were also modeled for the children. Children determined if they could hear a speaker in different situations. I demonstrated different ways I could speak. I spoke real softly one time, loudly another time, mumbled once, talked with my head turned, talked while fidgeting, and talked with my hands in front of my mouth. We brainstormed as a class why it was difficult to hear each of those times and then practiced speaking so that everyone in the class could hear and understand (an exception was made for one child with severe speech problems in understanding of her words; we only listened for loudness). I modeled some of these problems a couple of times a week, and before every speaking activity.

I couldn't expect the children to enunciate the sounds correctly without teaching them the sounds directly. Therefore, I used sound cards my teacher loaned to me. Each

card had a letter, a picture of an object with that letter, and the letter again. Each day, we practiced a sound by saying the letter, the picture name, and then the sound. Children then went over these individually during circle reading groups. The children had a hard time with the sounds at first; but soon they had memorized them. When reading aloud, children could remember the pictures that went with letters and then produce the sounds. I would make modifications to their sounds as needed. We then talked about how it is easier to understand people if they make sure they say the right sounds as they speak, and make sure people can hear those sounds.

I modeled speaking loudly enough and not mumbling throughout the folktales unit, acting, sharing language arts stories, and answering questions in class. I would ask students to say things again if I could not hear them, or if I could not understand them. With individual students, I worked on not whispering and maintaining an appropriate distance when speaking with someone.

Directed Listening/ Questioning

To enhance listening skills, other directed listening activities were implored in the classroom. One of the most obvious ways to encourage listening in the classroom was the listening center. Three children rotated through this center daily, so that every child would experience this center by the end of the week. Children were expected to listen to books on tape and flip through the books to see the pictures. Children were also encouraged to listen without looking in the book. With more time in the classroom, I would have included other things children could listen to. Some of these things would be scenes like the beach, the grocery store, or sporting events where they would have to listen to find clues to guess which environment they were listening to.

To facilitate listening skills, children also were directed in listening activities for specific lessons. Four of such lessons included stories read in math. The children were directed to listen to a certain element in the story, for example, the problem the characters had and how they solved it. I told the children they would get a chance to answer questions after the story, and had to put on their listening ears. I could see the children straining to hear what was said, and all but one or two children could answer the questions at the end of the story. Not only that, but the children could answer questions better that they were not even directed to listen for. These stories were used for measurement, more than and less than concepts, patterns, and addition readiness activities.

The first graders in this program also experienced listening practice in a "fun" medium, through the use of games. The game "Who Am I?" was used if time remained during transitions at the end of the day or before specials. One child would get up and turn his/her back to the class, while I would point to another child, who would say, "Who am I?" The first child would have three guesses as to who spoke. The first few times, the children had a hard time listening and guessing. After that, we talked about listening to where the sound was coming from and if it was a male or female. The children got so good at the game that we had to ask them to disguise their voices, and the guessers could still do well figuring out who spoke.

Another game I used for listening involved listening for patterns. This activity had many purposes, including teaching patterns and handling transitions. During times when children were putting things away and getting ready to join a whole group activity, I would choose a student to start a pattern using their bodies (clap, snap etc). Children

would have to figure out the pattern by the time they got to the carpet. Even children with their backs turned soon were able to listen to the sounds and figure out the pattern.

I also directed the listening of the children through the use of questions. In the beginning of the year, I had a hard time with children not paying attention while others were answering questions in readers circle, or in the whole group. I began to hold all the children accountable by asking specific students what the last person said. If the student could not repeat it, they could not answer the next question. Students were motivated to listen because by this point they enjoyed the opportunity to speak in front of the whole group. This also motivated speakers to speak loudly enough to be heard, since the listeners could legitimately say the speaker mumbled or wasn't loud enough.

Questions became a part of every activity. Students who did not hear the question had to ask a friend what it was, or pass their turn. Students were expected to listen to two or three directions at a time, and if they were not listening, they did not get to participate in the activity. I made sure everyone had the opportunity to listen by having specific students speak back directions to me, and then held everyone accountable. One activity that facilitated listening in this way was used to test knowledge of ordinal numbers. Children had sheets with rows of ten objects. I would tell them to color the fifth triangle blue or the third heart red, etc. Students knew they had to listen for shape, color, and number each time, and that I would only repeat the directions once. All but three students completed the activity successfully. I took the three who had trouble aside and reminded them about the importance of listening and repeated the activity during a free time.

Questioning became a daily activity during our word study. When studying vowels, I would read a story with many words with the featured vowel sound. I would then take a page and read it aloud, asking a specific child to name all the words with that vowel sound. The first few times, the children could maybe pick out one word as I read the sentence twice. By the third week, most children could pick out all the words after two readings, and some after one reading. The children could repeat the whole sentence to me, where before they said they couldn't remember it. These activities not only helped memory, but also encouraged the children to listen and remember specific words.

Literature

One component of this program to increase listening and speaking skills in this first grade classroom was a folktales unit. In this unit, children first had the opportunity to practice their listening skills in directed listening activities. Children were read two or three versions of the same folktale and had to pick out differences between the versions. The children had to be directed the first two times as I showed them differences, but then were able to pick out differences on their own.

Children then had the opportunity to pick out differences in their friend's folktales, as well as practice their speaking skills. The children were split into small groups; with each group assigned a folktale. These folktales were Little Red Riding Hood, The Three Little Pigs, and Goldilocks and the Three Bears. I modeled for the whole group starting a simple story and added one detail. The children in each group then went around a circle and each added a detail to their assigned story, as well as telling the group what detail the person before them added. This not only encouraged the children to listen to each other's stories; it also gave them a chance to speak to the whole group.

The group had to tell the storyteller if they couldn't hear or understand what the person was saying. The groups gradually got louder and were able to listen to details and complete the stories. Sample stories each group created are included in Appendix A

This activity was used as a lead into writing our own folktales. Children were encouraged to write the stories they had told, and this integrated the writing and speaking language modes. Children then had turns reading their story to the class in a loud voice for speaking practice, while the listeners had to give the writer suggestions on how to add, change, or finish things in their stories.

Children also were expected to listen to stories in language arts circle time and storytime. In language arts time, the children knew they would have to comment on what they liked and or disliked about the story, and write about it in some kind of comprehension activity. These activities changed each day, but some examples included retelling the tale, telling what happened in the beginning or the end, telling what they would do differently, or telling about one of the characters. Knowing they would have to complete these activities, the children were directed in their listening and able to complete the activities without having to go back to the story. Children then practiced reading their stories out loud and got suggestions from the group, much like the folktales writing activity.

These activities were completed with the higher achieving reading group, since the other two groups were still working on beginning consonant sounds. For other groups, I would book talk certain sunshine series books that had repeated patterns and matching pictures. The children knew they could use the pictures to help them find out words, but for many children, their only support was memorizing the words they had

heard me read. This encouraged them to listen to me as I read so that they could later share the story with friends.

Every day during snack, the children participated in storytime. As they ate, I would read them a story and then we would discuss the story afterwards. Some of these stories were stories without pictures, so the children had to listen and imagine everything that was happening in the story. The children got better about discussing what they liked and disliked about the stories, and what they would change, as time went on.

Drama

A major project for the classroom was a short play where each child would have a speaking part, called Someone to Count On. The play was connected to the classroom unit on community, for it featured "helpers" in the community that could be scary to children, but turn out to be people they can count on.

I introduced the play during an hour period where I talked up how exciting it would be to perform in front of the whole school and parents. I talked about how people would laugh at parts, and the children would get a chance to act and sing. I read through parts of the play so the children would be interested in the idea and want to participate.

The next class period, I broke the children into three groups, each group either working with the classroom teacher, an aide, or myself. Each group had about five-six children who all had speaking parts in that scene. The classroom teacher and myself tried to split the play equally between all the children, though we also tried to give some of the harder parts to children who we felt would be strong enough to carry them. We split the scenes so that each scene would have a couple of bold and talkative children mixed with some of the children we felt would be shy and need help projecting and feeling

comfortable on stage. I worked with the first scene by modeling parts to the children and then feeding them lines. We just worked on saying our parts in a seated position first. I also assigned the children for homework that week to practice their lines with a parent each night for fifteen minutes. This would help memorization. I worked individually with two children who I had a feeling did not have the opportunity to work with a parent.

We spent one hour each afternoon each day that week working in small groups on our lines. On the second day, I had my group start figuring out where they would stand and acting their parts. I helped the children determine how everyone could be seen by modeling with a couple of children what happened when I stood in certain places with other children watching. I also told them when I could not hear them speaking, and asked them to repeat their lines. We repeated these activities in small groups on the next day. On the fourth day, I had each of the small groups meet as a whole group and we presented each scene that had been practiced. Presenting the scenes helped the children realize that the play was funny. However, the children mumbled a lot and seemed nervous in front of their peers. After each scene, I gave the audience a chance to talk by asking them what things they liked about the scene and any problems they saw. Children pointed out parts they could not hear. I then asked people to raise their hands if they could see all the people in the scene all of the time. Those who couldn't gave us suggestions on where people could stand. I then asked if the scene seemed real. The children said that they felt people were just standing there waiting to talk.

To correct this, as a group we brainstormed ideas to make the scene more believable and talked about how people stand and look when they talk and listen. I believed this would be a great activity to help the play, but also to help the children

realize the behavior they should be exhibiting during other conversations. We talked about the way bodies should be pointed, facial expressions, and where people should be looking. We then practiced all of the scenes and audience members were charged with looking out for these characteristics. As the children critiqued each other, they became more believable and seemed like they were talking and listening to each other, instead of just remembering when it was their turn to speak. It also afforded the audience an opportunity to practice listening and to see how good conversations would look like on stage.

We then practiced the scenes on the stage while working on everything we had practiced thus far. We had the children describe how they would feel if they were really the person in their part. Meanwhile, we also taught the children the songs to go with the play. We practiced songs two afternoons a week, and acting and placement two afternoons a week for a three week period. After a dress rehearsal, the children were ready for two school performances with parents and other students in the school invited.

Social Experiences

From the first day, many of the children in our classroom did not interact academically with peers. A math activity from the third day that involved partners failed since pairs each worked on their half of the paper, instead of working with each other. I wanted to encourage the children to listen and speak with one another to help them academically and socially.

Socially, my clinical instructor and I developed a classroom that fostered talk and listening. Children sat in clusters of five-seven students, and were encouraged to talk to their friends during independent work and ask their friends for help. I modeled room

noise levels and how to talk in different room situations. The children soon knew to whisper if a small group was meeting and talk quietly during whole group independent work. I felt this was necessary since they will have different expectations when they leave the school setting.

I helped facilitate social experiences by chatting with two or three children everyday at recess. At first, the children wanted to speak directly to me, while ignoring their friends. I gradually asked children to ask their friends questions and took a secondary role in the conversations. After a few weeks, children could be seen having these discussions on the playground and at snack.

For special circumstances, I made special arrangements to encourage friendships and talking. One new student, for example, was having hard time making friends and complained about being bored at recess. One day at lunch, I had her and a outgoing child join me for lunch and started asking them questions and gradually asked them to ask each other questions. By the end of lunch, I was able to move about the room and work on other things since they had a conversation of their own.

A lot of modeling and discussion occurred for social experiences regarding respect for other children. I felt the children needed to understand how their words could affect others. When I heard children say mean things to each other, I took them aside and ask what happened and how each child felt. We talked about if the words were respectful, and other things we could say. The same thing happened if children were whining about who wasn't playing fair on the playground and screaming at each other. I always spoke calmly to the children, even when I had a problem, and expected them to do the same.

Our Star-of-the-Week was a person who shared the entire week about themselves. This program was not only used for social development, but also got the children talking. We had a booklet that parents filled out with the children on the weekends that the children shared. Children then talked about themselves, and I modeled asking appropriate questions. Children then had a turn asking questions of the Star. I felt this would help children learn to talk with peers and find out things about them to create friendships. I modeled listening to what the Star said to ask follow up questions to him/her.

Academically, children were made to work together and converse to get a job done. Children had to ask two peers a question before asking the teacher. While I was with reading circle, students knew they could only come to me with an emergency. Questions about how to use centers and how to complete independent work had to be fielded to peers. The classroom flowed very smoothly as students learned how to politely ask one another a question while not being disruptive.

Specific lessons were designed for peer cooperation. For the first cooperative activities, children had to take turns placing objects in patterns on a sheet, or coloring specific items in. Later, the tasks became more complex. Children had to organize a group of 20 straws in order of length, and explain to each other why they made their choices. They then had to explain these to other groups of two or three. Later, children had to talk to each other about items of different length, more than less than groups, and ordinal numbers. Children had to constantly check each other's papers, and explain to each other how to correct problems.

Results and Discussion

This program produced qualitative results in the listening and speaking skills of a first grade classroom. Results could be broken into different components of the program and the overall effects of the program.

Modeling and Social Experiences

Modeling allowed the children to understand talking expectations. Students were able to speak clearly at an appropriate tone during class discussions. They felt comfortable asking others to speak louder, and listened well enough that directions, in most cases, did not have to be repeated. Students followed rules about facing the speaking during circle time, and did not interrupt the speaker. Only two out of 17 students had speaking problems at the end of the program, one who continued to mumble and one who had speech problems and continued to see a speech therapist for pronunciation. The other speech resource child did not need services by the end of the program.

Socially, all but two pairs of students could demonstrate the ability to work cooperatively in a length lesson. Students were able to talk to each other by the end of the program without focussing questions to the teacher. The shy, new student was able to make friends so that she talked to other children on the playground instead of the teacher. She had previously complained about feeling sick three-four times a week, and by the end of the program did not mention feeling ill for three straight weeks. We decided that her new friendships may have helped her feelings. In the last week of the program, no student complained about verbal name calling by others.

Directed Listening/Questioning

Students at the end of the program were able to listen to three of four directions at once when completing activities. They could answer divergent questions about what they thought about literature and math, instead of repeating information already given to them. The ability to think critically was considered successful because of student's performance on oral discussions and written comprehension activities. Students could not only answer convergent questions, but also could analyze pieces of literature and math problems. For example, children could imagine themselves as parts of literature, defend the best part of a story, change the ending of a story, and compare mathematical qualities allowed by the end of the program.

Literature

By the end of the program, children could retell stories the heard, identify details in a story, add details, and discuss what parts they enjoyed in a story. Children could write their own folktales with five details and a beginning, middle, and end after hearing tales and telling them to peers. All but three students could retell stories so that others could hear them. By listening and speaking about literature, these students were able to identify main characters, story structure, and also communicate orally about stories with others. Appendix B includes a checklist of speaking skills that evaluated children at the end of a storytelling unit.

Acting

Our classroom play helped the mumbling of the children when they talked in many classroom activities. Most were intelligible on the stage, and many looked at each other while other people talked and showed proper listening behavior. The children were

able to use facial expressions and stand in places where the audience could hear them. One of our children, who mumbled often in the classroom, surprised us with her animated and loud performance. I hope that this performance will carry into the rest of our classroom experiences. The play was videotaped to analyze children's participation, and a copy of that videotape is available upon request.

Overall Classroom Changes

My students at the end of the term were active listeners who faced me, looked at me, and were quiet and attentive when I talked. They were able to answer questions asked without bringing in stories totally unrelated to the question. One of our speech-assisted children will probably not receive services in the next nine weeks because of her progression. In fact, she is the star student in her reading group in that she can produce all of the sounds for letters properly and quickly. Our other speech-assisted student has also made some progress. She is able to speak so that the majority of her classmates can understand her and can produce about half of the letter sounds correctly when the letters are modeled immediately before.

Mumbling has become less of a problem in this first grade classroom. One child came into the room whispering in my ear, with her words being totally incomprehensible to me in many instances. I have progressively asked her to repeat what she said louder, and have also asked her to stay at a proper distance when talking to someone. Though she still mumbles occasionally, she also has learned to ask questions in a manner similar to her peers. She was one of our star play performers in the class play.

Listening and speaking skills, as many researchers note, are important for future success of children (Scoresby, 1977; Lerstrom, 1990; Smith, 1993). This program was

implemented to encourage these skills in a first grade classroom. Qualitative results show that students spoke and listened with developed skills after the program, and the program had an overall effect of creating a classroom that encouraged talk and listening in a safe environment.

This program encouraged communication through a variety of classroom activities. Listening and speaking were not isolated experiences, but were maintained throughout every day through modeling, questioning, literature activities, drama, and social experiences. Children may not have been aware that one of the major goals of the period was communication development. Instead, communication activities became part of the total framework and routine of the classroom. The scope of the program may have contributed to its success in developing student communication skills.

Though the program's impact was directed to listening and speaking skills, research has shown us that these activities help other curricular areas. Siegel (1992), Eeds and Wells (1991), and Fitzgerald (1993) all commented how speaking and listening could help children analyze literature and understand the elements of story structure. This program found that students were able to take storytelling skills and put those skills into writing folktales with details and a definite beginning, middle, and end. Children also began to show higher order thinking in comprehension activities, where they could answer questions about why characters might do things, how they would do them differently, and what the story would mean in their hometown. These skills also increased student's attention to directions in content areas, especially math, where they learned to handle three or four directions at one time. These benefits were not main

objectives of the program, but helped integrate this listening program with other goals of the curriculum.

Implications and Conclusions

Future research should look at obtaining quantitative results for a communication program. In the scope of seven weeks, the author of this study did not have the financial resources or time in the classroom to create a quantitative evaluation system. With more resources, future researchers could examine each part of the program and determine which part had the most success. A similar procedure could consist of meta-analysis of studies examining a single part in similar communication programs to determine which part is most effective.

At the same time, future researchers should consider a longer program. Seven weeks may not be enough time to analyze the long-term effects of a communication program. The program should also be compared to a control group, a group of students in a traditional classroom with no directed communication experience. The benefits of the program could then be weighed against normal communication development in schools today.

Listening and speaking skills are skills children need throughout their lives for success in personal, academic, and business situations. Programs that encourage these skills should be evaluated at even young ages to give children the foundation they need. This program is the beginning, but similar procedures must continue for the children in this program, as well as others in traditional language arts classrooms.

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Appendix A

Sample Versions of Folktales told by Students

Students added their own changes to folktales that they said would make them more interesting. Below are samples from three students who created original versions.

The Three Little Pigs

Once upon a time there were three pigs who left their homes to make houses. One house was out of ladybugs, another out of chocolate, and another out of bricks. A wolf came and sneezed on the first house so all the lady bugs scattered. He then ate the chocolate house. The pigs ran to the third house where they were safe from the wolf. This house was made of bricks. The pigs learned not to be lazy and to build their houses from strong materials.

Little Red Riding Hood

Little Red Riding Hood went through the forest with a basket of goodies to visit her sick grandmother. Her grandmother was sick because she was allergic to fur and a wolf was in her house. The wolf tried to trick the little girl, but she knew the wolf was not her grandmother because of all of the fur. She knew her grandmother would sneeze at the fur. The little girl threw the basket of food out of the house. It smelled so good, the wolf chased after it. Little red Riding hood bolted the door and found her grandmother in the closet. They were safe.

Goldilocks and the Three Bears

A little girl named Goldilocks went through the woods even though she was not supposed to. She was a naughty little girl who would not do what she was supposed to do. She was so rude, she went into a house without knocking. This rude little girl ate the porridge of the bears who owned the house, broke all of their furniture, and slept in their beds. When the bears came home, they told her they would have gladly shared their things if she had asked. Since she didn't ask, she was never welcome to visit again. At least not until she got some manners.

Appendix B

Checklist of Student Skills after a Folktale Unit

Place a check for each child that has demonstrated each skill for columns one through five. Rate children on the following scale for columns six through nine:

1: skill not demonstrated yet
2: skill just developing
3: skill developed adequately
4: skill developed beyond expectations

Child	***Simple stories that are handed***	***Animals included***	***Speaks Clearly***	***Mentions one detail***	***Adds one detail***	***Speaks loudly enough***	***Writes version with four sentences***	***Begin Middle End of story***	***Corr. form a size of letters***
Jesse	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	3	2	3	3
Leah	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	3	4	3	3
Robbie	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	2	2	2	3
Will	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	3	3	4	4
Jennifer	▲	▲	▲		▲	4	4	4	4
Ieshia	▲	▲	▲			1	1	1	1
Elizabeth	▲	▲		▲	▲	2	1	1	4
Katie	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	4	3	3	3
David	▲	▲	▲	▲		3	4	4	3
Maisy	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	3	2	3	2
Jessica	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	4	4	4	4
Daniel	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	3	3	3	4
Kenzie	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	3	3	2	1
Vincent		▲		▲		2	1	2	1
Caitlyn	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	3	2	2	2
Derek		▲	▲	▲	▲	1	4	1	1
Caleb	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	3	4	4	4

Children must exhibit 4 out of 5 checkmarks in columns 1 through 5 and must meet at least a level of 2 on the psychomotor columns. Highlighted children did not meet these criteria and met in a remedial group for more work on these skills.

Skills Specific to Listening and Speaking: Children had to listen to each other's story and mention one new detail another child added. Children had to speak clearly and speak loudly enough. Children had to listen to explanations of folktales and discuss three aspects of folktales. The last columns are for the objectives of writing in the folktale unit, an example how this unit integrated speaking, listening, and writing.

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